

Understanding Sentence Parts

Practice 1

People read and write in sentence parts, that is, chunks of meaning. In one sentence below, sentence parts are divided into meaningful chunks. In the other, they are divided meaninglessly. Try reading both sentences. Identify the one that's easier to read because sentence parts are divided into meaningful chunks.

1. Tobacco is a / custom loathsome to / the eye hateful to the nose harmful / to the brain dangerous / to the lungs and in the / black stinking fume thereof nearest / resembling the horrible / smoke of / the pit that is / bottomless.
2. Tobacco is a custom / loathsome to the eye / hateful to the nose / harmful to the brain / dangerous to the lungs / and in the black stinking fume thereof / nearest resembling / the horrible smoke / of the pit / that is bottomless.

James I, "A Counterblast to Tobacco"

Practice 2

Read each pair of sentences, pausing at the slash lines, and then identify the sentence that is divided into meaningful chunks (sentence parts).

- 1a. I am not / ashamed to confess that / I am / ignorant of what I / do not know.
- b. I am not ashamed / to confess / that I am ignorant / of what I do not know.

Cicero

- 2a. If you / put a chain around the / neck of a / slave the other / end fastens / itself around your own.
- b. If you put a chain / around the neck / of a slave / the other end / fastens itself / around your own.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Compensation"

- 3a. If a man bites/ a dog that / is news.
- b. If a man / bites a dog / that is news.

John Bogart

- 4a. A pessimist / is one who feels bad / when he feels good / for fear he'll feel worse / when he feels better.
- b. A pessimist is one who feels / bad when he / feels good for / fear he'll feel / worse when he feels better.

Anonymous

- 5a. Optimism is a / cheerful frame of / mind that enables a tea / kettle to sing though / in not water up / to its nose.
- b. Optimism is / a cheerful frame of mind / that enables a tea kettle / to sing / though in hot water / up to its nose.

Anonymous

- 6a. There are three marks / of a superior man / being virtuous / he is free from anxiety / being wise / he is free from perplexity / being brave / he is free from fear.
- b. There are three marks of a superior man being / virtuous he is free / from anxiety being wise / he is free from perplexity being brave / he is free from fear.

Confucius

- 7a. To have and to hold from this day forward for better / or for worse for richer / or for poorer in sickness / and in health to love / and to cherish till death / do us part.

- b. To have and to hold / from this day forward / for better or for worse / for richer or for poorer / in sickness and in health / to love and to cherish / till death do us part.

Book of Common Prayers

- 8a. The only way / to keep your health / is to eat what you don't want / drink what you don't like / and do what you'd rather not.
- b. The only way to / keep your health is to eat what / you don't want drink / what you don't like and do what you'd / rather not.

Mark Twain

- 9a. There are three ways / to get something done do / it yourself hire / someone or forbid your / kids to do it.
- b. There are three ways / to get something done / do it yourself / hire someone / or forbid your kids to do it.

Monta Crane

- 10a. Perhaps the most / valuable result of all / education is the ability to make / yourself do the thing you / have to do when it ought to be done whether / you like it or not.
- b. Perhaps the most valuable result / of all education / is the ability / to make yourself do the thing you have to do / when it ought to be done / whether you like it or not.

Thomas Henry Huxley